

# All in one heritage resource



With Bronze Age river depositions, Iron Age hill fort, Roman temple, Saxon settlements, Tudor palaces and shipyards, and pioneering industrial sites like Woolwich Arsenal, Greenwich is rich in archaeological resources. The Greenwich Heritage Centre which stores these valuable collections combines the local history library and borough museum in one stunning location on the Royal Arsenal site at Woolwich. Collections Manager **Mary Edwards** highlights its archaeological focus.



Greenwich Heritage Centre holds thousands of artefacts and objects, almost all of which are local finds, ranging from Celtic and Roman times to industrial and social material of the modern period. Important excavations across the Borough, such as Lesnes Abbey (whose Augustinian canons were responsible for whipping Henry II as penance for his part in the murder of Thomas a Becket), remains on Shooters Hill and in Greenwich Park, and Woolwich dockyard have yielded much of the material. An exhibition being prepared for this summer will showcase these collections in order to highlight

Greenwich's archaeological heritage and interpret some of the most interesting artefacts for both specialists and the general public.

Some of the most important items in the collections are from the Woolwich dockyard. These include a stoneware kiln in use at the end of the 17. century and a huge collection of fragments of the pottery fired in it. The kiln, set up by a migrant potter working in the German style, produced some of the earliest salt glazed stoneware in Britain. The Centre is planning a permanent exhibition on the history of Greenwich which will feature the kiln and its output. Of the many hundreds of bowls, jars and pipes from this excavation, the distinctive Bellarmine or Bartmann jugs with their characteristic medallion of a man holding a cup and a walking stick are perhaps the most interesting. So much so, in fact, that this 'Woolwich Man' has been adopted as the Centre's logo.

The Centre provides an integrated facility to encourage researchers to investigate any area of Greenwich by using not only the archaeological finds and data but also maps, reports, photographs, local historical society archives, newspapers and other sources. School groups are accessing the archaeological collections for A level project work in growing numbers and adult group visits can also be arranged.

### Visit Greenwich Heritage Centre:

*Admission to the Centre, which is open from Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 5pm, is free. Although every effort is made to produce items on demand, it is advisable to telephone (0208 854 2452) in advance of your visit to minimise delays.*

### Meanwhile up river...

The Theatre Museum in Covent Garden closed its doors and packed its collections off to the V&A in January. Negotiations with the Royal Opera House and others had broken down, and the major funding requirements for capital works proved an insuperable obstacle. Other locations, including Blackpool, have been suggested for a new museum, but the V&A says it will open a special section, in due course.

But, in a dramatic 11th hour reprieve, Wandsworth Museum has been saved by the intervention of a local trust. Wandsworth Borough Council had been determined to axe its 21 year old Borough Museum, which has occupied a listed town centre court building since 1996, to save money.

The announcement of the Hintze Family Charitable Foundation's £2 million rescue package was made as protesters gathered to hear the final debate. Petitions with over 20,000 signatures had been presented.

Local societies, teachers, residents and staff had been arguing since January that face to face and hands on experience of local history has irreplaceable value for children and adults alike. The closure was also raised in Parliament.

The museum will be relocated to West Hill where it will be combined with the De Morgan collection. Two local libraries will be relocated to the court house. ~~BW

London has well over 100 museums presenting some aspect of heritage or archaeology. Which ones should more people know about? Contact the features editor (becky.wallower@dial.pipex.com) with suggestions for our occasional museum profiles.